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# MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

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A summary of significant events of  
interest to USDA management

Issue #2

January 9, 1975

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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER TO BE PUBLISHED BIWEEKLY.....The Management Council Newsletter (formerly Management News) will be published every two weeks beginning with this issue. Deadlines for articles and guidelines for their preparation were provided in Mr. Bolduc's January 2 memo to Management Council members. (Contact: Jan Bucknell, OMF, ext. 74678.)

## BUDGET STATUS

1975 APPROPRIATIONS ACT SIGNED BY PRESIDENT ON DECEMBER 31.....The Act provides \$12,466,277,000 which is \$147,334,000 below the first vetoed bill and \$14,127,000 less than the budget estimate. (Contact: Bob Barham, OMF, ext. 75901.)

PRESIDENT SIGNS FIRST BUDGET RESCISSION BILL.....On December 23 the President signed H.R. 17505, the first budget rescission bill passed by the Congress. Congress failed to approve the proposed rescission of REAP and REA. In signing the bill the President expressed dismay at this failure. (The REAP funds expired for obligation on December 31, 1974. Congress did pass a bill to extend their availability for one year. The President vetoed that bill.) (Contact: Steve Dewhurst, OMF, ext. 73045.)

1976 BUDGET HEARINGS TO BEGIN SOON.....The President will submit the FY 1976 Budget to Congress by the end of January or early February. Congressional hearings will probably start about February 17, immediately after the February recess. Agencies will be notified as soon as definite information is available. (Contact: Chuck Jewell, OMF, ext. 76176.)

## MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

REGIONAL GRANT INFORMATION SYSTEM CANCELLED AS OF DECEMBER 31.....The Management Council is now considering who will pay for the \$22,500 operation cost to the Department of the REGIS system in the first six months of FY 1975. (Contact: Amos Martinez, OMF, ext. 73671.)

THE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL WILL MEET JANUARY 28, 29, AND 30 IN NEW ORLEANS TO REVIEW NFC OPERATIONS.....Issue papers are being prepared and should be distributed to Council members by January 15. (Contact: J.P. Bolduc, SEC, ext. 77247.)

DEPARTMENT EVALUATES ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD.....Excluding grant and loan programs, the Department will spend about 10 percent of its outlays in fiscal year 1975 on administrative overhead activities. Overhead costs have increased 45 percent in the past three years from \$208 million to \$301 million. Of this \$93 million increase, the agencies accounted for about \$50 million and the centralized working capital fund for most of the rest. The next several issues of the Newsletter will discuss specific administrative overhead problems in the Department. (Contact: Bill Holcombe, OMF, ext. 72370.)

TRAVEL EXPENSES WILL HAVE TO BE REDUCED DURING THE REMAINDER OF THE FISCAL YEAR.....President Ford signed the 1975 Supplemental Appropriations Bill which cuts back travel by 10 percent for the remainder of the fiscal year. Initial instructions from OMB advise us to establish ceilings for each separate account at levels equal to 95 percent of available travel funds. Several agencies have already advised OMF that this limitation will be extremely difficult, even impossible, to comply with. OMF is working with the Office of the General Counsel and OMB to attempt to get more flexible instructions for the enforcement of this ceiling. (Contact: Bob Barham, OMF, ext. 75901.)

PRESIDENT VETOES PER DIEM AND MILEAGE INCREASE.....The "Travel Expenses Amendments Act of 1974" was vetoed apparently because it included special provisions which would have cost the Veterans Administration an additional \$25 million. The President, however, acknowledged that current per diem and mileage rates for official Government travel are inadequate and will ask Congress for a new bill. If such a bill is passed and is effective before the end of FY 1975, it would further aggravate the problems mentioned in the previous article on travel ceilings. (Contact: Al Strelser, OMF, ext. 73226.)

OMB PLANS TO IMPROVE INTERGOVERNMENTAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS.....A recent GAO review indicated lack of compliance by Federal agencies with OMB and Treasury requirements dealing with the coordination of projects at the Federal and State and local levels and notification to recipients of grant awards.

OMB has developed a remedial work plan to help assure uniform grant administration and strengthen governmental coordination through:

- Development of a single, standard application coversheet for grants.
- Strengthened agency compliance with grant notification requirements.
- Expansion of programs covered by regular reporting requirements.

The end result is expected to be improved dissemination of information on Federal assistance to State and local governments. (Contact: Amos Martinez, OMF, ext. 73671.)

USDA RETURNS TO PART-TIME REPRESENTATION AT THE FEDERAL REGIONAL COUNCILS.....Full-time representatives are being withdrawn. Future USDA representation to the Councils will be USDA agency personnel designated by the Secretary. (Contact: Ed Hansen, OIA, ext. 73493.)

## PERSONNEL

### AWARD NOMINATIONS DUE IN OP.....

Nominations for 1975 Distinguished and Superior Service awards are due February 3, 1975. Employees who contributed to successful programs or management improvements should be considered for Secretarial recognition.

Nominations for the 1975 William A. Jump Award are due February 5, 1975. Employees under age 37 as of 12/31/74 whose achievements in public administration have been exemplary may be nominated.

Nominations for awards sponsored by the Federal Government Accountants Association are due January 15, 1975. Nominees should be employees in the Washington Area with records of outstanding achievement in the improvement of financial management.

(Contact: Dr. John W. Kizler, OP, ext. 76977.)

GAO PLANS TO REVIEW FEDERAL WHITE COLLAR PAY STRUCTURE.....This will affect USDA as well as other Federal agencies, according to information received in Office of Audit. During this review, several USDA field offices will receive questionnaires on local labor conditions from GAO's Federal Personnel and Compensation Division. (Contact: Eugene Monahan, OA, ext. 76703.)

### NEW OFFICIALS APPOINTED:.....

John Campbell was appointed Acting Chief Judge, Administrative Law Judges, effective January 3, 1975, following the retirement of Chief Judge Harry S. McAlpin.

Henry W. Meetze was appointed Director, Office of Automated Data Systems, effective January 5, 1975. He served previously as Associate Director and Chief Operating Officer, Data Processing Federal Reserve Board.

(Contact: Jan Bucknell, OMF, ext. 74678.)

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

TITLE VI COMPLIANCE REVIEWS SHIFTED TO MULTI-AGENCY BASIS IN THE FIELD.....The emphasis previously was on individual agency compliance reviews. In the future, all USDA agencies in a particular county will be reviewed simultaneously to identify local or general conditions that may affect several programs. This method of review greatly extends Title VI coverage and is more cost-effective. (Contact: Miles S. Washington, Jr., OEO, ext. 74256.)

## ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

OVERDUE UNACKNOWLEDGED CORRESPONDENCE REMAINS A PROBLEM.....Under Secretary Campbell addressed the problem in his letters, December 23, 1974, to Heads of Agencies. He stressed the importance of acknowledgment when it is apparent that the final reply cannot be made on a timely basis. Statistics for November showed an increase in the percent of mail unacknowledged and unanswered. The increase was due to the increased volume of mail entering the Department, and liberal Thanksgiving leave policy. December statistics are expected to show a further increase in unacknowledged and unanswered mail. A special effort must be made to catch up. (Contact: Jerry Pepper, 00, ext. 78393.)

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROCUREMENT OF ADP EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES IS TRANSFERRED TO 00.....TECHNICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSED ADP PROCUREMENT REMAINS WITH ADS.....OMF and 00 are developing a simplified billing procedure for this new WCF cost center. The proposed billing procedure will be presented to the Management Council before implementation. Technical approval by ADS is needed to maintain equipment compatibility and interface capability. (Contact: Ed Gauthier, 00, ext. 74556.)

THE SECRETARY HAS APPROVED THE RELOCATION OF REA...00 is exploring various methods of funding the move out of the South Building to a local site to be selected. Cost of the move is estimated at \$475,000. Benefitting agencies may be asked to share in absorbing moving costs. (Contact: Bill Hamilton, 00, ext. 73141.)

ACTION REQUIRED AS 1974 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AMENDMENTS TAKE EFFECT 2/19/75.....Agencies must, by 2/19/75 or "promptly" thereafter, publish a current index of certain final opinions and orders, statements of policy and interpretation, and administrative staff manuals and instructions. In the past, we had to maintain this index--now we must publish it. Other major changes were made in the Act. OGC and COMM will soon hold a meeting to discuss the impact of the 1974 amendments and what actions are required by whom. 00 will update the Department Fee Schedule. The update will be published in the Federal Register by January 13. (Contact: Bob Siegler, OGC, ext. 76035 or Dean Smith, 00, ext. 77527.)

GSA WILL REQUIRE SEMIANNUAL SUPPLEMENTARY SUPPLY ACTIVITY REPORTS IN FY 1976.....Agencies will have to submit detailed supply activity (procurement activity) reports for the periods July 1, 1975, through December 31, 1975, and January 1, 1976, through June 30, 1976. GSA states that they need data on the type, source and cost of items purchased by agencies to improve their procurement programs and supply responsibilities. (Contact: Kim Boyer, 00, ext. 77557.)







